

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 CU-04 AID-05 COME-00

EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01 DHA-05 /077 W

-----032468 010005Z /12

O 312300Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY QUITO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6219

INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 7521

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, PINS, SHUM, EC,

SUBJECT: AZTRA UPDATE: THE PROTESTS LOSE MOMENTUM

REF: QUITO 7476

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: OVER THE PAST WEEKEND, AZTRA MOTIVATED STUDENT AND WORKER INCIDENTS HAVE MARKEDLY DIMINISHED. THE ECUADOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION WILL MEET WITH MINGOV JARRIN TODAY. THE SAN CARLOS AND VALDEZ SUGAR MILL WORKERS' STRIKERS HAVE RETURNED TO WORK, THUS ENDING THE MOST SERIOUS LABOR PROBLEM FOR THE GOE RESULTING FROM AZTRA. FORMER BRIG. GEN. RAUL PUMA, WHO WAS REMOVED FROM THE MILITARY FOLLOWING THE JAN. 1976 COUP, HAS PUBLISHED A STRONG CRITIQUE OF THE GOE POSITION, CHARGING THE TRIUMVIRATE WITH FULL RESPONSIBILITY. IT APPEARS THAT THE MOMENTUM OF THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT PROTESTS HAS BEEN BROKEN AND THAT THE GOE NOW ENJOYS FIRMER POLITICAL GROUND. END SUMMARY.

2. AZTRA MOTIVATED STUDENT AND LABOR INCIDENTS DECREASED SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THE PAST WEEKEND AND IT DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY THEY WILL RECOVER THEIR LOST MOMENTUM. THE
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HEART WENT OUT OF MAJOR LABOR RESISTANCE WHEN, ON OCT. 29, THE UNIONS OF THE SAN CARLOS AND VALDEZ SUGAR MILLS DECIDED TO RETURN TO WORK. THE UNION FEARED MASSIVE GOE-SUPPORTED FIRINGS IF THE STRIKES, WHICH SEEMED TO BE HAVING LITTLE EFFECT, CONTINUED.

3. THE UNION'S FEAR WAS REINFORCED WHEN THE PRESIDENT OF

THE CEOSL-AFFILIATED SUGAR WORKERS' FEDERATION WAS JAILED FOR THE SECOND TIME ON OCT. 29. ALSO ARRESTED, THOUGH NOT PUBLICLY CHARGED, WAS THE HEAD OF GUAYAQUIL'S FIREMAN'S UNION. THE FIREMEN PLAYED A ROLE IN RECOVERING THE CADAVERS AT AZTRA AND MADE CONTROVERSIAL STATEMENTS AFTERWARDS.

4. THE ECUADOREAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION, LED BY FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER JULIO PRADO, WILL CALL ON MINGOV. COL. JARRIN THIS AFTERNOON, OCT. 31, TO MAKE KNOWN THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT THE AZTRA INCIDENT. ALSO CALLING FOR AN IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION WERE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND THE ARCHBISHOP OF GUAYAQUIL.

5. OF THOSE ARRESTED, ONLY THE VELASQUISTA POLITICIAN ESPINEL IS KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN RELEASED. CEOSL LEADERS, CHAVEZ, CHANG AND ESPINOSA REMAIN IN CUSTODY. THE HEAD OF THE ECUADOREAN RED CROSS RECENTLY VISITED CHAVEZ AND REPORTED THAT HE IS IN GOOD HEALTH AND IS NOT BEING ABUSED.

6. NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF AZTRA REMAINS NEGLIGIBLE AND GENERALLY PRO-GOVERNMENT. GUAYAQUIL'S EXPRESO IS STILL THE ONLY PAPER GIVING RELATIVELY WIDE COVERAGE. IT ALSO PUBLISHED TWO RECENT LEAD EDITORIALS NOTING THE LACK OF COVERAGE BY ITS COMPETITORS. THE LEADING NEWS MAGAZINE VISTAZO HAS ALSO TAKEN A STRONG ANTI-GOVERNMENT LINE. IRONICALLY, EL COMERCIO, PERHAPS THE MOST SILENT OF ALL, CONFIDENTIAL

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PUBLISHED A DETAILED INTERVIEW ON OCT. 30 WITH AMB. ALLARD LOWENSTEIN ON THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

7. THE FRENTE AMPLIO DE LA IZQUIERDA (FADI), THE COMMUNIST PARTY/PSRE POLITICAL FRONT, RIDICULED THE GOE'S ASSERTION OF AN INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST CONSPIRACY NOTING THAT THE LABOR CONFEDERATION SUFFERING THE GREATEST DEGREE OF GOE REPRESSION (CEOSL), HAS STRONG TIES TO THE UNITED STATES LABOR MOVEMENT.

8. FINALLY, IN A PAID AD APPEARING IN THE OCT. 30 EXPRESO, FORMER BRIG. GEN. RAUL PUMA STRONGLY ATTACKED THE GOE AZTRA DEFENSE AND THE SUPREME COUNCIL. PUMA LAYS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AZTRA DEATHS FIRMLY ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS AND SAID THEY MUST BE REPLACED. PUMA, WHO WAS MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS DURING THE RODRIGUEZ LARA GOVERNMENT, WAS REMOVED FROM THE ARMY FOLLOWING THE POLITICAL MANEUVERING THAT REPLACED RODRIGUEZ WITH THE CURRENT TRIUMVIRATE IN JANUARY 1976.

9. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THERE ARE RUMORS OF POSSIBLE ACTIONS BY UNIONS, POLITICIANS AND EVEN MILITARY OFFICERS, THE SITUATION SEEMS TO BE STABILIZING. ALTHOUGH THE PUMA

ATTACK WAS VERY STRONG, HE HAS SUFFERED FROM A CERTAIN
MAVERICK'S REPUTATION IN THE PAST AND CAN BE SHRUGGED OFF.
THE GOE APPEARS TO HAVE SURVIVED THE IMMEDIATE CONSEQUENCES
OF THE AZTRA INCIDENT IN REASONABLY GOOD CONDITION. HOWEVER,
IT WILL HAVE LEFT IN ITS WAKE NOT ONLY THE TRAGEDY OF AZTRA,
BUT THE WEAKENING OF THE DEMOCRATIC LABOR MOVEMENT, A RECORD
OF REPRESSION OF OPINION, AND A POSSIBLE COVER-UP.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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Drafter: n/a
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Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fa742227-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
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